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S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 000721

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF DAS DON YAMAMOTO FROM AMBASSADOR
CENTCOM PASS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMANDER DOUG BROWN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [FR](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: REPORT OF CRASH IN DJIBOUTI OF U.S. UNMANNED
AERIAL VEHICLE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (S) Commanding General of French Forces in Djibouti, Gerard Pons, told me during my regular weekly meeting with him on May 19 that he had been informed three days earlier, through a private Djiboutian citizen, of the crash in Djibouti "last week" of a U.S. small unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The crash occurred, according to Pons, close to the town of Damerdjog, located between Djibouti's international airport and the town of Loyada near the Somali border. Pons expressed displeasure that the flight had occurred without his having been informed of it. He said that while he does not ask the U.S. about the purpose of its UAVs, he does ask that the U.S. extend the courtesy of at least informing of an intent to conduct such an operation. He stated that flying a UAV of this type, near an international airport used by the French military, without advance notice, could be especially dangerous for helicopters. I and USLO Chief, who accompanied me in the meeting, reassured General Pons that we were not aware of any U.S. UAVs being operated in Djibouti, but promised to look immediately into the matter.

2. (S) USLO Chief conducted an initial investigation just after with Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) personnel at Camp Lemonier. He was told that JSOTF had indeed operated a UAV, that it was carrying a camera device, and that it had crashed. At this time it is still unknown where the crash occurred. The incident had taken place, JSOTF stated, about a week prior. (Note: Further inquiries with JSOTF revealed that the operation may actually have occurred in April. We cannot at this point confirm.) According to information provided by JSOTF, debris from the UAV was subsequently retrieved by private Djiboutian nationals from the village of Damerdjog, who then approached the Camp offering to return the debris. (Note: It is unclear how the nationals identified the UAV as originating from the Camp. End note) It is understood that JSOTF paid a sum of money to the Djiboutian nationals for the debris. We also understand that JSOTF is doing (or has already done) its own internal investigation to determine who may have launched the UAV and other material information associated with this incident. We have a secondary report that the UAV flight was a test run that failed.

3. (S) COMMENT: I am deeply concerned that a UAV operation -- test or otherwise -- was launched in Djibouti without advance notice to me or appropriate members of my Country Team, to the Government of Djibouti, or to the Commanding General of French Forces, whose units operate in the vicinity of Djibouti's civilian airport and the border with Somalia.

I have requested a meeting with the JSOTF Commander at Camp Lemonier for further details and will also raise this with General Robeson, the CJTF-HOA Commander. We are concerned, of course, about potential fallout from the Government of Djibouti, although it has not lodged a formal protest as of this date. That still may come as word gets out in this small community. In addition, the lack of notice could very well have caused an incident involving aircraft operating in the region, for which the U.S. could very well have been held accountable. End Comment.

RAGSDALE